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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 0173  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1034

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 002769

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NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/MARCHESE/HARDING

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KPKO](#) [AR](#) [TU](#) [LE](#)

SUBJECT: LEBANON: TASHNAG INSECURE ABOUT TURKISH TROOPS

REF: BEIRUT 2721

Classified By: Jeffrey D. Feltman, Ambassador. Reason 1.4(d).

SUMMARY

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11. (C) During an August 24 meeting with the Ambassador, poloff, and pol FSN, Armenian-Lebanese politician Hagop Pakradounian (MP for Bourj Hammoud) claimed that the entire Armenian community in Lebanon opposes the deployment of Turkish troops as part of an augmented UNIFIL, adding that they suspect Turkey's motives. He has spoken with Government of Lebanon (GOL) officials on the subject, but it seems he has found little traction with his arguments. The Ambassador took note of the Armenian community's concerns, but said that the U.S. would not create obstacles to a speedy deployment of UNIFIL-plus. In a discussion of the Lebanese political situation, Pakradounian -- who is part of Michel Aoun's bloc -- expressed displeasure with Free Patriotic Movement leader Aoun's vocal and unquestioning support for Hizballah's right to bear arms. END SUMMARY.

"WE FEEL INSECURE"

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12. (C) Pakradounian said that his concerns are not based on politics (as a member of the Tashnag party, Pakradounian is loosely pro-Syrian, though more out of convenience than conviction), but on Turkey's lack of a "peacekeeping mentality." Turkey has bad relations with virtually all of its neighbors. Apart from the "genocide" committed against the Armenians in World War One, Pakradounian remarked that the Lebanese do not remember fondly the era of Ottoman rule over Lebanon. Pakradounian said Turkey is only keen to participate in UNIFIL-plus as a pretext for expanding its influence in the Middle East and to win brownie points with the European Union and deflect criticism of its human rights record.

13. (C) Pakradounian said that the other Armenian-Lebanese party, Ramgavar, also oppose the Turkish deployment, as do the three Armenian religious leaders in Lebanon (Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant) and Cabinet Minister Jean Hogasapian (a Hariri man whose opinions Pakradounian normally disdains). Pakradounian added that, even far from Ankara, Armenians still feel very insecure about "the Turks." "We

feel concerned. We understand we need Turkish troops. But they will come with all of their 'networks'."

¶4. (C) Pakradounian said he had raised this with President Lahoud, who is Armenian on his mother's side. Lahoud had been sympathetic but said that the matter is out of his hands. PM Siniora told Pakradounian that the GOL is desperate to get the augmented UNIFIL on the ground. "He says he's been kissing everyone's ass, and still they are not coming." Pakradounian said Siniora believes Turkish forces in Lebanon would serve as an effective counterweight to Syria (given Turkey's history of forcing Syria to back down under the threat of military force). Pakradounian also mentioned in passing that he would worry about what would happen if some Armenian decided to take a violent act against one of the Turkish soldiers.

¶5. (C) Saying that "we expect the U.S. will help us out," Pakradounian asked what the USG can do. The Ambassador responded that ten days had now passed since the fragile cessation of hostilities went into effect, with still no date set for the first significant UNIFIL-plus deployment. While taking note of the Armenian-Lebanese concerns, the USG would not throw up any more obstacles to the UNIFIL deployment, lest the violence re-erupt in the interim.

COMMENT

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¶6. (C) While the Armenians associated with Tashnag stuck with the pro-Syria camp following the March 14 protests, they do not seem to be uncomfortable supporting Hizballah's continued right to bear arms beyond government control.

BEIRUT 00002769 002 OF 002

Pakradounian indicated he is not pleased with Michel Aoun's unabashedly pro-Hizballah stance during the recent conflict (even Aoun has begun to tone it down of late, perhaps realizing he is angering Christians of all denominations). Perhaps we can get the Armenian-Lebanese to join the multi-confessional public chorus for Hizballah to disarm. The Ambassador promised Pakradounian to pay a visit to Tashnag party headquarters in Bourj Hammoud (a largely-Armenian Beirut neighborhood not far from the Embassy) as soon as the situation in Lebanon has stabilized.  
FELTMAN